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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7089
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0184
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0302
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 3074
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0307
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3350
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5746
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0187
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0690
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 001249

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NEA FOR DAS CARPENTER AND MAG, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MO](#) [EU](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCO MOVES FORWARD ON INTERNATIONAL ELECTION
OBSERVERS, BUT HURDLES REMAIN

REF: A. RABAT 994
[1](#)B. RABAT 1122

Classified by Ambassador Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an action request. Please see paragraphs 1 and 7-9.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Efforts to add Morocco's first-ever international elections observation to the existing domestic monitoring of the elections are gaining steam, but running against the clock. The Interior Minister publicly affirmed the mandate of the Human Rights Consultative Council (CCDH) to lead domestic and international observation. CCDH has turned to UNDP as formal coordinator of the international effort, though all agree that U.S.-funded NDI will practically take the lead. As the GOM is apparently reluctant to have the U.S. out front, NDI recently asked us to urge other donors to provide additional observers. We agree that a low USG profile would keep the focus on the elections. It would be helpful if Department could demarche key partners in capitals to support this effort (see paragraph 9). In sum, international monitoring is an opportunity to advance democracy in Morocco that should not be lost. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) At a July 23 meeting with political party leaders, Minister of the Interior Chakib Benmoussa said that Morocco would allow 3,000 international and domestic election observers for the September 7 lower house parliamentary elections. According to the press, Benmoussa clarified the role of the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) as the GOM's choice to oversee the election observation process, and announced that the CCDH had chosen the Club of Madrid as its implementation partner. Also present at the meeting were CCDH president Ahmed Herzenni, Interior Minister Delegate Fouad Ali El-Himma, Minister of Justice Mohammed Bouzoubaa, and Minister of Communication Nabil Benabdellah, a broad endorsement of the CCDH role.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The MOI told the press that the 3,000 observers

will have unfettered access to polling stations in any of the country's 16 regions. Observers will act according to neutral international election observation standards, and will be required to publish their findings. Interior Minister Delegate Fouad Ali El-Himma separately underscored the GOM commitment to a transparent and fair election, saying that the King had expressed his clear will that no intervention (i.e. tampering) would be tolerated and that everyone must take on the responsibility to ensure that the King's will is carried out, according to press. We heard directly that during a private audience with elected officials in Laayoune (Western Sahara) in July El-Himma delivered the same tough message on clean elections.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy remains in close contact with NDI, the UN, and the international donor community on international observation efforts. UNDP has accepted CCDH's request that it coordinate international observation, and the UN will shortly field a consultant. The UN made clear to CCDH that it had neither the time nor funding to provide significant observations-- only the US might be in a position to do so. UNDP has worked closely with us and called two donor meetings, but at these meetings the EU noted that it is spending all its money on domestic observation (Euros 600,000). They and other European donors are unhappy about the short time remaining before elections and most missions cite this as a reason not to engage in the international effort.

¶5. (SBU) For its part, NDI is working with the CCDH to manage the entire international component, in coordination with the Club of Madrid and IRI. At the current time, we understand that NDI has proposed 40 international observers,

to be divided into three teams led by well-known political figures, including a European former head of state or government via the Club of Madrid. NDI has a letter of invitation from CCDH which we confirm represents a government mandate, given public and private assurances to us from the MOI. NDI also reports progress on obtaining a formal mandate from the GOM, but some questions remain to be worked out.

¶6. (SBU) Both NDI and UNDP have passed the UN-brokered Declaration of Principles on Election Observation, which includes commitments from both the country and observers, to the GOM/CCDH and have received verbal assent. NDI has requested formal documentation authorizing and guaranteeing "all access." Despite the July 23 press conference we detect some foot dragging at middle levels of the MOI, and are concerned that the MOI may not be fully on board. This is consistent with comments we have heard repeated from government and civil society actors alike that "irregularities" -- if in fact they do occur in the upcoming elections -- will not come from the leadership but rather from mid-level functionaries and local strongmen. NDI is seeking formal assurances from the GOM, particularly on access and accreditation.

The Importance of International Support -- A Request

¶7. (SBU) As indicated by the MOI's public announcement of the Club of Madrid rather than NDI as CCDH's partner in the July 23rd meeting, the GOM has been careful to avoid putting an "American" face on the international election observation efforts. NDI is anxious for greater international participation, and has approached us directly to lobby other government for support, particularly additional observers. Even two or three from each country would effectively serve to broaden the scope. Potentially interested governments NDI has been in contact with include Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, and Norway.

¶8. (SBU) We understand Germany is looking at funding Democracy Reporting International (DRI) -- a Berlin-based international NGO that issued an excellent report on the elections early in the year. DRI reportedly has tacit agreement from the government to observe the counting and

reporting of votes, areas it had identified as weak points in the last election. A diplomatic colleague suggested that timely encouragement from Washington could help inspire the German Foreign Ministry to approve the requested funding. A Canadian colleague also urged an approach to his government, which could help spring a pending request. The Dutch told us on August 1 that they will be funding two additional observers, who will be slotted in the NDI effort. UNDP also indicated that the UN would welcome additional funding.

19. (C) We believe a Washington demarche to key interested capitals, including London (some interest, we hear), Paris, Madrid, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Scandinavians and to the EU/EC in Brussels, and perhaps, in the wake of their own election, to Turkey, could help produce additional observers. Broad support would aid this step forward in the evolution of democratic processes in Morocco. We understand that NDI also plans to invite observers from other Arab countries, to further spread the message on free and fair elections. Time is running out, however, so such an approach, if appropriate, should be made as soon as possible.

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